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It is the slow, the certain, the beautiful, and the unchanging process of cosmical law, which gives the character of infinite to the universe. Finite man has not as yet read the pages of the law, and cannot therefore calculate the age of this earth. He has tried over and over again to do so, but Professor Tait is not so near to the truth as Solomon was; other "guesses" (*Quarterly*) may be nearer, but the men who guess are at present without chart, compass, or sounding-line on the fathomless and boundless ocean of eternity. — *The Geographical Magazine.*

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EVOLUTION IN THE NETHERLANDS: TESTIMONIAL  
TO MR. DARWIN.<sup>1</sup>

WE have great pleasure in printing the following correspondence: —

UTRECHT, *February 20, 1877.*

TO THE EDITOR OF NATURE, — On the sixty-ninth birthday of your great countryman, Mr. Charles Darwin, an album with two hundred and seventeen photographs of his admirers in the Netherlands, among whom are eighty-one doctors and twenty-one university professors, was presented to him. To the album was joined a letter, of which you will find a copy here inclosed, with the answer of Mr. Darwin.

I suppose you will like to give to both letters a place in your very estimable journal, and therefore I have the honor to forward them to you.

P. HARTING,

Professor, University, Utrecht.

ROTTERDAM, *February 6, 1877.*

SIR, — In the early part of the present century there resided in Amsterdam a physician, Dr. J. E. Doornik, who, in 1816, took his departure for Java, and passed the remainder of his life for the greater part in India. His name, though little known elsewhere than in the Netherlands, yet well deserves to be held in remembrance, since he occupies an honorable place among the pioneers of the theory of development. Among his numerous publications on natural philosophy, with a view to this, are worthy of mention his "*Wijsgeerig-natuurkundig onderzoek aan gaande den vorspronkelijken mensch en de vorspronkelijke stammen van deszelfs geslacht*" (*Philosophic Researches concerning Original Man and the Origin of his Species*), and his treatise,

<sup>1</sup> From *Nature*, London.

“Over het begrip van levenskracht uit een geologisch oogpunt beschouwd” (On the Idea of Vitality considered from a Geological Point of View). The first appeared in 1808; the latter, though written about the same time, was published in 1816, together with other papers more or less similar in tendency, under the title of “*Wijsgeerig-natuurkundige verhandelingen*” (Treatises on the Philosophy of Natural History). In these publications we recognize Doornik as a decided advocate of the theory that the various modifications in which life was revealed in consecutive times originated each from the other. He already occupies the point of vantage on which, shortly afterwards, Lamarck, with reference to the animal kingdom, and, in his wake, Prévost and Lyell, with respect to the geological history of our globe, have taken their stand.

Yet the seeds scattered by Dr. Doornik did not take root in fertile soil. It is true that a Groningen professor, G. Bakker, combated at great length some of his arguments regarding the origin of man; they attracted but little public attention, and soon passed into oblivion.

A generation had passed away ere the theory of evolution began to attract more attention in the Netherlands. The impulse was given by the appearance of the well-known work, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, of which a Dutch translation was published in 1849 by Dr. T. H. van den Broek, professor of chemistry at the military medical college in Utrecht, with an introductory preface by the celebrated chemist, Prof. G. T. Mulder, as well known in England as elsewhere. This work excited a lively controversy, but its opponents were more numerous than its partisans. Remarkably enough, it found more favor with the general public, and especially with some theologians of liberal principles, than with the representatives of the natural sciences. The majority of zoölogists and botanists of any celebrity in the Netherlands looked upon the writer's opinions as a chimera, and speculated on the weaker points rather than on the merits of the work. Notwithstanding, this presented no obstacle to a comparative success, and in 1854 even a third edition of the translation was published, enriched by the translator with numerous annotations.

Among the few Dutch *savants* to recognize the light which the theory of development spreads over creation must be mentioned two Utrecht professors, namely, F. C. Donders and P. Harting. The former, in his inaugural address pronounced in 1848, “De

Harmonie van het dierlijk leven, de Openbaring van Wetten " (The Harmony of Animal Life, the Revelation of Laws), expressed his opinion that in the gradual change of form consequent upon change of circumstances, may lie the cause of the origin of differences which we are now wont to designate as specific. The latter, in the winter of 1856, delivered a series of lectures, before a mixed audience, on The History of Creation, which he published the following year under the title of " Voorwereldlijke Scheppingen " (Antemundane Creations), with a diffuse supplement devoted to a critical consideration of the theory of development. Though herein he came to a stand-still with a " non liquet," yet it cannot be denied that there gleamed through it his prepossession in favor of a theory which several years later his famed and learned colleague, J. van der Hoeven, professor at Leyden, making a well-known French writer's words his own, was accustomed to signalize as an explanation, " De l'inconnu par l'impossible."

In 1858 your illustrious countryman, Sir Charles Lyell, was staying for a few days in Utrecht. In the course of conversations with this distinguished *savant* on the theory of development, for which Lyell himself, at least in his writings, had shown himself no pleader, the learned of this country were first made observant of what had been and what was being done in that direction in England. He attracted attention to the treatise of Wallace in the *Journal of the Linnæan Society*, and related how his friend Darwin had been occupied for years in an earnest study of this subject, and that ere long a work would appear from his pen, which, in his opinion, would make a considerable impression. From these conversations it was evident that Lyell himself was wavering. In the following edition of his Principles of Geology, he declared himself, as we know, a partisan of the hypothesis of development, and Professor Harting speedily followed in the same track. In his " *Algemeene Dierkunde* " (General Zoölogy), published in 1862, he was able to declare himself with full conviction a partisan of this hypothesis. Also another famous *savant*, Miquel, professor of botany at Utrecht, who had previously declared himself an opponent of the theory of development, became a convert to it in his later years, for although this is not expressed in his published writings, it was clearly manifest in his private conversation and in his lectures. To what must this conversion be attributed? With Harting and Miquel, as well as with Lyell and so many others in every country of Europe, this was the fruit produced by the study of your Origin of

Species, published in 1859, which first furnished one vast basis for the theory of development. That work, translated into Dutch by Dr. F. C. Winkler, now conservator of the geological, mineralogical, and palæontological collections in "Teyler's Foundation" at Haarlem, excited great and general interest. It is true that a theory striking so keenly and so deep at the roots of existing opinions and prejudices could not be expected at once to meet with general approbation. Many even amongst naturalists offered vehement opposition. Prof. J. van der Hoeven, bred up as he was in the school of Cuvier, endeavored to administer an antidote for what he regarded as a baneful poison by translating into our tongue Hopkins' well-known article in *Fraser's Magazine*. However, neither this production nor the professor's influence over his students could withstand the current, especially when, after his death, the German zoölogist, Prof. Emil Selenka, now professor of zoölogy at Erlangen, was appointed at Leyden. A decided advocate of your theory, he awakened in the younger zoölogists a lively enthusiasm, and founded a school in which the conviction survives that the theory of development is the key to the explanation of the history of creation.

In Utrecht, Professor Harting, with convictions more and more decided, was busy in the same direction; and Selenka's successor in Leyden, Prof. C. K. Hoffmann, did not remain in the rear. Other names, among which are Groningen and Amsterdam professors, might here be cited. By the translation of your "Descent of Man" and "The Expressions of the Emotions in Man and Animals," with copious explanatory notes, and by various original papers and translations treating on your theory, Dr. Hartogh Heys van Zouteveen has also largely contributed to the more general spread of your opinions in the Netherlands.

To testify how generally they are held in esteem among the younger zoölogists and botanists, and more and more obtain among professors of analogous branches in this country, we might refer to a multitude of less important papers and articles in the periodicals.

This, however, we deem superfluous, since by offering for your acceptance an album, containing the portraits of a number of professional and amateur naturalists in the Netherlands, we offer a convincing proof of our estimation of your indefatigable endeavors in the promotion of science and our admiration of you, sir, as the cynosure in this untrodden path. We recognize with pleasure Dr. Hartogh Heys van Zouteveen as the primary mover

of such a demonstration of our homage. The execution, however, devolved upon the directors of the "Netherland Zoölogical Society," who reasoned that, with the presentation of this unpretending mark of esteem, a few words on the history of the theory of development in the Netherlands would not be entirely unacceptable, the more so, since this historic sketch clearly shows that, albeit some ideas in that direction had already been suggested here, yet to you alone reverts the honor of having formed by your writings a school of zealous and convinced partisans of the theory of development.

Among the names in the accompanying list you will observe several professors of natural history, anatomy, and physiology at the three Dutch universities, the "Athenæum Illustre" of Amsterdam, and the Polytechnical Academy of Delft, the conservators of the zoölogical museums, the directors of the zoölogical gardens, and several lecturers on zoölogy and botany at the high burghal schools.

Accept, then, sir, on your sixty-ninth birthday, this testimony of regard and esteem, not for any value it can have for you, but as a proof, which we are persuaded cannot but afford you some satisfaction, that the seeds by you so liberally strewn have also fallen on fertile soil in the Netherlands. We are, sir, etc., the directors of the Netherlands Zoölogical Society,

(Signed)

President, A. A. VAN BEMMELEN,  
Secretary, H. T. VETH.

The following is Mr. Darwin's reply : —

DOWN, BECKENHAM, *February 12.*

SIR, — I received yesterday the magnificent present of the album, together with your letter. I hope that you will endeavor to find some means to express to the two hundred and seventeen distinguished observers and lovers of natural science who have sent me their photographs, my gratitude for their extreme kindness. I feel deeply gratified by this gift, and I do not think that any testimonial more honorable to me could have been imagined. I am well aware that my books could never have been written, and would not have made any impression on the public mind, had not an immense amount of material been collected by a long series of admirable observers, and it is to them that honor is chiefly due.

I suppose that every worker at science occasionally feels depressed, and doubts whether what he has published has been worth the labor which it has cost him ; but for the remaining

years of my life, whenever I want cheering, I will look at the portraits of my distinguished co-workers in the field of science, and remember their generous sympathy. When I die the album will be a most precious bequest to my children. I must further express my obligation for the very interesting history contained in your letter of the progress of opinion in the Netherlands, with respect to evolution, the whole of which is quite new to me. I must again thank all my kind friends from my heart for their ever-memorable testimonial, and I remain, sir, your obliged and grateful servant,

(Signed) CHARLES R. DARWIN.

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### RECENT LITERATURE.

MIVART'S LESSONS FROM NATURE.<sup>1</sup>—Any one who expects to find in this book a series of mild and temperate homilies on the lessons to be derived from a study of nature will be disappointed. There is rather more said about the works of certain of Professor Mivart's fellow naturalists and philosophers than of the works of nature, and the book is more polemical than prosy. Herbert Spencer and Professor Huxley are criticised, often with good effect, and their weak points—for they have them—exposed. But the author in his criticisms of the agnostic school of philosophers is a little one-sided. In the present state of philosophy and science, the attitude of nescience may be a healthy and natural one. The author, while in his anatomical workshop using the tools of the agnostic, seems when wearing his philosopher's spectacles to look at creation in quite a different mood. In his fears of the ultimate prevalence of a purely scientific mode of thinking, he does not take into account the low specific gravity and enormous density of the mass of superstition in the world, the wrong thinking, sometimes even amounting to insanity, resulting from crude and mistaken pseudo-religious conceptions, which have done and will tend to do infinitely more harm to the race than the class of conceptions denominated by some writers as agnostic, and which must for centuries to come be held by the few. While one may not agree with the extreme views of Spencer, Huxley, and particularly Haeckel and others who have, as some believe, established a sort of "scientific priesthood" with a more or less one-sided, bigoted following, yet the criticisms coming from that quarter will do most efficient service in making men think and feel more rationally.

It will be gathered from the foregoing remarks that Professor Mivart's *Lessons* is really a criticism of the evolution school of naturalists by one who from being an extreme Darwinian has become a moderate evolutionist *sans* any taint of what is known as materialism, and who con-

<sup>1</sup> *Lessons from Nature, as manifested in Mind and Matter.* By ST. GEORGE MIVART. New York: D. Appleton & Son. 1876. 12mo, \$2.00.